A few days ago, King Charles kicked off Canada's 45th Parliament by reading the throne speech in the Senate, the first time that the U.K. monarch had read a throne speech in decades (this duty is usually performed by the governor general).

Many in the Canadian media, including many right-leaning commentators, have greeted this event with great enthusiasm. They have also heaped much praise on Carney for inviting King Charles to speak in the first place. But what is the purpose of this pomp and circumstance? What does this symbolism symbolize?

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In discussing Canada's monarchy, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that Canada's monarchy is, of course, a *constitutional* monarchy. The monarch is our official head of state, yet he wields no actual power. Therefore, King Charles only has a role in Canadian politics in a technical sense, as opposed to a meaningful one. Never in recent history

has the monarch objected to laws passed by Parliament, instead performing a performative rubber-stamp and blindly approving whatever bills make their way through the House of Commons and the Senate.

The monarch doesn't even control the contents of the throne speech. King Charles simply read a laundry list of Liberal talking points off of a sheet of paper.

Even more poignantly, King Charles started his speech with a land acknowledgment, essentially abdicating his sovereignty over Canada.

It is worth noting that not all monarchists are constitutional monarchists, with ascendant right-wing intellectuals like Curtis Yarvin advocating for the absolute monarchy of a "National CEO" that reigns supreme and wields complete power over the nation. Yet in the Canadian context, these sorts of monarchists are nowhere to be found. Instead, our monarchists follow a brand of monarchism that places heavy value on a sentimental attachment to the historic British Empire, and see the King as a symbol of that empire's former prowess—the operative word here being "former".

Yet it is worth considering why Canada venerated the British Empire in the first place.

Before the 1950s, veneration of the British Empire formed the core of Canada's identity, stemming from our refusal to join the American rebellion against the crown in the 18th century. But, during this time period, the British Empire was vast and powerful, spanning large chunks of Africa as well as the Indian subcontinent. There were valid reasons for this veneration that went beyond the acknowledgement of our history or loyalty to our forefathers.

But, like most European nations, Britain abandoned its colonial Empire in the 1950s, removing itself by choice from the list of world superpowers. More than anything, this is why our veneration of Britain vanished. Britain, lacking an empire, was no longer a country worth venerating. This caused Canada's core identity to be thrown into doubt and shaken, and the 1960s brought the dawn of a new identity based on leftist policies such as multiculturalism, single-payer healthcare, and gun control. The Red Ensign was scrapped in favour of a flag that features

vague and inoffensive symbolism, Dominion Day was renamed Canada Day, and our repatriated constitution explicitly allows for affirmative action policies and contains a section on indigenous rights.

The post-1960s Canadian identity is one that I have always strongly disliked. Like the pre-1960s identity, it was always based on a core of reactionary anti-Americanism that exaggerates the differences between us and our southern neighbours.

But this identity has turned out to be far more fragile, insecure, and—perhaps worst of all—sanctimonious than the identity it replaced.

The British conception of Canadian identity was always political, with Canada being cast as a righteous, law-and-order alternative to the chaotic United States. Yet there was always a strongly non-political cultural element to it, which balanced out its political edge.

The post-1960s identity, by contrast, is purely political. Leftist policies, instead of being viewed dispassionately and analytically—as policies generally should be—have become sacred articles of faith upon which no compromise is possible. To question them is to question a core tenet of

the nation's identity—hence the "un-Canadian" accusation that is so frequently thrown at Conservatives.

And because this ideology is rooted in anti-Americanism, the United States becomes the singular point of comparison for all policies enacted, which is why our decidedly mediocre healthcare system is praised so enthusiastically.

On top of that is the self-righteousness, which breeds a sense of smug complacency, in turn making Canadians blasé about their country's decline.

In short, it is a truly horrible identity.

Because of this, I have a degree of sympathy for traditionalists who venerate Canada's monarchy. In a country where leftists have been dominant for decades, symbols of the Canada that existed before the events of the 1960s—things that small-c conservatives would recognize as being worth conserving—are few and far between. The monarchy, as an institution that has withstood the transformations that have happened elsewhere, is a notable exception. It has the same appeal to

Conservatives as the Catholic church—that is, something that stretches back to antiquity and is based on a pre-enlightenment moral order.

Institutions, though, are more than just pure and unchanging symbols of heritage and history. They are run by people, with the people who run them shaping the way those institutions are perceived by the general public.

And if an institution is connected to the identity of a country, the ways that said country changes will be reflected in the perceptions and sense of authority afforded to that institution.

King Charles, far from representing the glories of the British Empire, holds political views similar to those embedded in the throne speech he read. He's long been a climate change activist and has compared the present-day United States to 1930s Germany.

The British Empire, meanwhile, is now long dissolved, with the United Kingdom—a country whose decline has arguably been more shocking and precipitous than that of Canada's—being a paltry shell of its former self. Now, if Britain's monarch had raised objections to the abdication of

the British Empire and the myriad of policies and politicians that landed the U.K. where it is now, I could see more justification for giving respect to the monarch. But there exists scant evidence that the fastidiously politically-neutral Queen Elizabeth or the leftist King Charles ever so much as raised a finger to stop this process from playing out.

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Now, contrary to socialist or right-wing populist critics of the monarchy, I don't take issue with the monarchy for being hereditary, hierarchical, anti-democratic, or elitist. In my view, there is nothing inherently wrong with having a caste of elites; a functional society needs elites to provide leadership and moral direction.

Rather, my complaint is with the quality of the current elites, and what those elites represent.

The monarchy's aesthetics make it a compelling symbol of the world as it existed before the modern liberal era, or even the Enlightenment. However, aesthetics are essentially useless if they are not backed up by concrete actions and principles.

And the British monarchy has sat idly by while the principles that the people who venerate it champion have been laid to waste. Despite being a Conservative institution in theory, it has not bothered to conserve the things that Conservatives care about, making it a cargo cult that exists purely for sentimental value.

A man who sits next to Mark Carney and dutifully reads a campaign speech written by the political party that has run Canada into the ground for the past decade is hardly a brave protector of ancient Anglo-Saxon wisdom and hierarchy.

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Over the past few years, I have come to believe that Canada is in the midst of an identity crisis. Our post-1960s identity crumbled under the weight of post-national self-flagellation and declining living standards, only to be hastily revived via the "Team Canada" cargo cult—a movement that stands for nothing except spiteful anti-Americanism.

To me, adulation of the monarchy has a similar appeal to some Conservatives as "Elbows Up" has to those on the left. It promises the

revival of an identity that has been in decline or altogether abandoned—in this case, the pre-1960s Canadian identity that placed heavy emphasis on loyalty to the British Empire and pride in our Anglo-Saxon heritage. Once the aesthetics and sentimentalism are removed, though, there isn't much of an underlying structure.

Just as the idealized Canada of the 1990s—the time in which the "Elbows Up" crowd wishes to return to, and often thinks we still live in—can't easily be revived, neither can the early 1900s world of a dominant British Empire with Canada as its loyal subject.

Rebuilding Canada's identity will be a long and arduous process, one that will take much thought and deliberation. One thing, however, is for certain: monarchism will not be the basis of that new identity.